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E. Steven Collins' family files wrongful death lawsuit

by Ayana Jones

The family of the late radio personality E. Steven Collins has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against Chestnut Hill Hospital, alleging that the staff failed to properly treat the heart attack that claimed his life.

The wrongful death lawsuit was filed on Monday in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas.

The lawsuit alleges that Collins received substandard care in the Chestnut Hill Hospital emergency room on Sept. 8, 2013. He died shortly after midnight Sept. 9, as his wife, Lisa Duhart-Collins and two sons watched medical personnel make unsuccessful attempts to revive him.

“E. was an icon in Philadelphia and we hope to obtain a measure of justice for his family,” said attorney Tom Kline of Kline and Specter, P.C. who filed the suit with Dean Weitzman of Silvers, Langsam and Weitzman, P.C.

“I think we’ve all lost a really great guy, and the hospital needs to really understand what they’ve done in this instance by failing to provide the proper care,” said Weitzman who was a close friend of Collins.

The lawsuit lists the following defendants: Chestnut Hill Hospital Company, Chestnut Hill Health System, University of Pennsylvania Community Health Network, Community Health Systems, Chestnut Hill Emergency Associates, P.C., and Dr. James Miranda, the attending emergency physician.

A Chestnut Hill Hospital spokeswoman did not return calls by the *Tribune*’s deadline.

Collins, 58, arrived at Chestnut Hill Hospital’s emergency department at 9 p.m. on Sept. 8 where he presented with chest pain, high blood pressure, clammy skin and related complaints.

Kline said when Collins was taken to the emergency room, he underwent an electrocardiogram which showed that his heart was abnormal.

The complaint alleges that the defendants failed to appropriately recognize, diagnose and treat the severity of Collins’ life threatening cardiac condition. The complaint states that Collins should have received standard treatment for a heart condition known as NSTEMI (non-ST segment elevation myocardial infarction).

Instead of treating Collins with standard drugs like aspirin, nitroglycerin and heparin, Kline said an emergency room doctor ordered a medication that lowered his blood pressure so much that his heart couldn’t recover.

“He was given a high blood pressure medication which severely depressed his heart’s ability to function. He basically was given a medication that compromised his condition, rather than help his condition,” Kline said.

Kline said according to medical experts with whom they consulted, Collins needed to be stabilized and placed under the care of a cardiologist who could remove a clot that had developed.

“Instead he was left in the emergency room, deteriorating by the minute and he tragically died,” Kline said.

While staff prepared to transfer Collins to Penn Presbyterian Medical Center, his condition worsened and he was declared dead that morning at 12:09 a.m.

“The family hopes that by letting people know what really happened to E. that it will help the community understand that if someone has problems with weight or blood pressure or diabetes — all of which he had — that this kind of incident could occur, which could be avoided,” Kline said.

At the time of his death, Collins was director of urban marketing and external relations of Radio One and hosted the show “Philly Speaks” which aired Sundays on Old School 100.3 FM.

Throughout his lengthy career, Collins was associated with several radio stations, including WHAT, WDAS and WRNB. He was a radio and TV public-affairs commentator locally and nationally.

He was active in various organizations including Concerned Black Men of Philadelphia, Big Brothers and Big Sisters and the Mayor’s Commission on Literacy.

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